

# MIND TO MIND

Creative writing that explores the abstract side  
of our profession and our lives

*Stephen T. Harvey, M.D., Editor*

## Meanwhile

Jane Blanchard

**Y**ou enter surgery. I wander off  
to find the waiting room. I try to sit,  
back propped. Computer on my lap, I scoff  
at headlines, ask too soon, “What time is it?”  
Not nearly late enough. I sign my name  
and number on the nurses’ log, then head  
downstairs for food and drink, the route the same  
as earlier but in reverse. Instead  
of getting takeout, I plop down at some  
small table, look around me as I eat.  
Few visitors appear as grim or glum  
as I expected. Done, I leave my seat  
to someone else, go browse the gift shop, pay  
respect to portraits, find the chapel, pray.

### About the Author

Jane Blanchard divides her time between Augusta and Saint Simon’s Island, Georgia. Her poetry has been published in journals, magazines, and anthologies around the world as well as online. Her two collections—*Unloosed* and *Tides & Currents*—are available from Kelsay Books.

About the winning poem, she states, “This sonnet describes my own experience during my husband’s operation at Saint Mary’s Hospital (Mayo Clinic) in Rochester, Minnesota, in November 2016.”

### Editor’s Note

Jane Blanchard’s unforgettable poem, “Meanwhile,” is a moving portrayal of someone often overlooked—the surgical patient’s loved one left to wait or wander the halls of the hospital.

We do not have to agree with the aphorism, “There are no atheists in foxholes,” to envision the waiting room as a metaphorical foxhole. Blanchard’s understated tone captures the sense of aimlessness and desperation of those left waiting for loved ones under anesthesia.

This is a quietly sophisticated poem composed without a thesaurus. Many readers will reach the end without realizing they’ve just read a textbook Shakespearean sonnet. Like all skilled formalists, Blanchard camouflages the poetic scaffolding of the poem so that it doesn’t detract from the poignancy of the last line. It reminds me of the last line of another sonnet, “On His Blindness,” written by John Milton nearly 400 years earlier: “They also serve who only stand and wait.”

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“Meanwhile” is the winning poem of ANESTHESIOLOGY’s first annual creative writing competition, The Lethon.

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